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Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 ITC-01 COME-00 /019 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7825
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2821

E.O. 11652: XGDS1
TAGS: EPAP, ETRD, CS
SUBJECT: ITC HEARINGS ON MEAT IMPORTS

1. THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED THAT U.S. MEAT PRODUCERS WHO HAVE TESIFIED BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION CONCERNING IMPORTS OF MEAT ARE SEEKING TO BROADEN IMPORT CONTROLS TO COVER PROCESSED MEAT AND RETAIL CUTS. THIS INFORMATION COME FROM COMMODITIES ADVISOR TO THE MINISTER OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND COMMERCE. COSTA RICA SEES THE ABILITY TO SHIP PROCESSED MEAT OUTSIDE OF THE ALLOCATIONS IN THE U.S. VOLUNTARY IMPORT PROGRAM AS A USEFUL SAFETY VALVE DURUMG PERIODS WHEN PRODUCTION EXCEEDS THE AMOUNT THAT COULD BE MARKETED IN THE U.S. (UNDER THE VRS PROGRAM) AND IN OTHER MARKETS.

2. AT THE PRESENT TIME, ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY'S COMMODITIES ADVISOR, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT MEAT MARKETING PROBLEM. ALL MEAT THAT CANNOT BE SHIPPED TO THE U.S. IS BEING PURCHASED AT A VERY GOOD PRICE (65 CENTS A POUND) BY VENEZUELA.

3. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER IT HAS A TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT MARKET IN VENEZUELA. AT PRESENT THE MARKET IS EXCELLENT BECAUSE VENEZUELA HAS STOPPED CONT-
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RABAND IMPORTS FROM COLOMBIA AND THER IS A SHORTAGE OF MEAT. COSTA RICA IS ABLE TO GET A GOOD PRICE FOR ITS MEAT IN VENEZUELA BECAUSE IT IS PERMITTED UNDER A TEMPORARY MEASURE ADOPTED BY THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH BUYERS, SUCH AS SUPERMARKET CHAINS. IN THE PAST, COSTA RICA HAS HAD TO DEAL WITH A VENEZUELAN GOVERN-MENT ENTITY THAT IMPORTS AND DISTRIBUTES AGRICULTURAL

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PRODUCTS (EQUIVALENT TO THE CONSEJO NACIONAL DE PRODUCCION
IN COSTA RICA). THE ENTITY HAS OFFERED VERY LOW PRICES
AND MOREOVER IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO PAY SUBSTANTIAL
BRIBES TO THE VENEBMELAN MILITARY IN ORDER TO GET THE
BUSINESS. THE MILITARY "BITE" BEGAN IN 1974 WHEN IT WAS
DECIDED THAT VENEZUELAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT WOULD BE
THE MEANS OF TRANSPORTING MEAT FROM COSTA RICA TO VENEZUELA.
THE MILITARY ONLY PROVIDED PLANES ONCE OR TWICE, AND THE
SHIPMENTS NOW MOVE BY CHARTERED COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT. ALTHOUGH
THE MILITARY NO LONGER PROVIDE TRANSPORT, THEY STILL RECEIVE
A PAYMENT WHEN THE SALES TAKE PLACE THROUGH THE VENEZUELAN
GOVERNMENT, ACCORDING TO THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT SOURCE.

4. COSTA RICA EXPECTS TO SEND A DELEGATION TO TESTIFY
AT ONE OF THE HEARINGS TO BE HELD BY THE INTERNATIONAL
TRADE COMMISSION ON MEAT IMPORTS. IT HAS NOT YET BEEN
DECIDED WHETHER A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WILL LEAD TTPF
DELEGATIONOR WHETHER THE DELEGATION WILL CONSIST ONLY
OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEAT PACKERS AND CATTLEMEN.
THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT IS ALSO CONSIDERING WHETHER OR
NOT TO EMPLOY A WASHINGTON LOBBYIST OR LAW FIRM TO ASSIST
WITH THE MEAT PROBLEM. COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR SILVA IS
BEING ASKED FOR HIS ADVICE ON THIS MATTER.
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Sent Date: 17-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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